Church Union News and Views

Organ of the Continuation Committee
of the
South India Joint Committee on Union

Vol. IV JANUARY 1934 No. 4

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News and Views

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Vol. IV **JANUARY 1934** **No. 4**

Editorials

Meeting of Joint Committee

The Joint Committee on Church Union representing the three Churches that are taking part in South India will meet at the Methodist Synod Hall, Royapettah, Madras, at 9 a.m. on Tuesday, the 13th of February, 1934. A notice of this meeting and of the main items of business that will be transacted at that time appeared in the November number of *Church Union News and Views* and hence those details need not be repeated here. There is no doubt that this will be one of the most momentous meetings that the Committee has held. If this meeting proves successful in solving the two or three great problems that will come before it, there ought to be no further serious difficulty in proceeding rapidly with the plans for union. If this meeting does not solve those problems, then there probably will be many more years of doubt and difficulty, of suspicion and self-assertion which will prevent the speedy union of these Churches. It should, therefore, be a matter of special daily prayer for all who have the interest of the Church of God at heart to ask Him to be present through His Holy Spirit at these meetings in order that He may guide and direct all the deliberations, that He may reveal His will and show the Committee how that will may be carried out.

The Basis of Union

It has been stated over and over again that the Basis of Union within the Church of Christ must be the fellowship of the larger group together with freedom for the individual and for the congregation to do what he or they think best. There must be a genuine union in which the individual and the congregation recognise the authority and the fellowship of the whole Church. The bane of the Church in the past has been the individual freedom that has run riot. There has not been the respect for the fellowship that there should be. On the other hand in some Churches there has been the over-emphasis upon authority and uniformity and the individual as well as the individual congregation have been crushed so that there was nothing left but to obey the dictates of the hierarchy or to follow the teachings of tradition.

Hence in the union that we are seeking to form there must be a due recognition of these two great principles and if they are not recognised there cannot be union. Those of the Free Churches who believe in the liberty of conscience must recognise history and fellowship. Those who are accustomed to central authority and the leadership of strong men must recognise that even the feeblest saint has the right to live in accordance with his individual conscience provided he does not too seriously offend the consciences of others. It is no doubt difficult to maintain this true balance, but we must find that balance or the curse of divisions will remain with us.

Six Ways to Tell Right from Wrong

In his latest book we are told Dr. Fosdick lays down six ways by which an individual or a group of individuals may be able to tell whether a particular thing that they wished to do or not to do is right or not. We are not sure that we agree with Fosdick in all these six items or that we would say that they are the only items. But nevertheless could we all follow these six ways we probably would be able to agree much better than we do now.

The six ways that Dr. Fosdick mentions are these :

1. Common sense.
2. Sportsmanship. (Play the game. Do not injure other players.)
3. Consult your best self. (We presume Dr. Fosdick means not selfishness. That would be our lowest self.)
4. Give it Publicity. (Do not do things in secret. Do not keep back your motives and purposes. Be open and above board.)
5. Submit it to your most admired Personality. (Carry it to Jesus your Lord as did the disciples of John when they went and told Jesus.)

6. Foresight. (How will it turn out? What will be the results of such action or lack of action?)

These rules are undoubtedly meant more or less for personal, individual action. But they certainly apply to our Church Union Movement as well as elsewhere.

Christmas and the Divided Church

We do not believe in the story of Santa Claus as a genuine personality who visits every house everywhere throughout the world in one particular night and bestows his gifts upon the little ones especially. But we do believe very definitely and very sincerely that Jesus Christ our Lord is everywhere present on Christmas day and that He knows and helps and gives gifts to all who love Him throughout the whole world.

Still we cannot help but wonder what Jesus must think and what He must feel when He finds His followers in country after country, and city after city, and even village after village, divided from one another and while they talk about Him and sing about Him and pray in His name on that day, especially rejoicing in His love and in His mercy, they still very carefully separate one from the other and will have nothing to do with one another. Even where His table is spread and He presides as the host at His own Supper these followers of His refuse to go to each other's places of worship and refuse to receive any who might come from these other denominations. Surely the Father-heart of God and the love of Jesus Himself must be deeply grieved and offended at such a sight. The patience of God must be tried unto the uttermost that decade after decade should go by and men should still in their professed loyalty to Him refuse to have fellowship with others who profess to be equally loyal. Oh! how great must He think our pride and our vainglory that we should presume to know God so well that we alone in our little group can claim exclusive possession of the whole truth.

The story is told of an American village where around the green in the centre of the village there were three Churches, a Congregational, a Methodist, and a Baptist Church. At the Christmas eve celebration the Congregational Church began their service with singing the hymn 'Will there be any stars in my crown?', the Methodist Church, beginning a moment or two later, sang with great gusto 'No, not one, no, not one', and then the Baptist Church started their service by singing 'Oh, that will be glory for me'. The non-Church goers who happened to be walking across the green at that time could not help but feel that these three songs represented truly the rivalry, the lack of love, and the selfishness of the divided Church of

God. Nothing but love such as that which Jesus had and patience such as He hath shown can bring us together into that One Body, which is our Lord's, of which He Himself is the Head.

Church Union News and Views

Owing to the fact that the special funds that the Continuation Committee has had at its disposal (by means of which we have been able to print our magazine up to this time at a price much below cost) have all been exhausted it will not be possible to continue to publish further numbers. The number for March will contain the Report of the meeting of the Joint Committee held in February together with other documents. After that publication will probably be suspended indefinitely.—EDITOR.

Articles

Some Fundamental Necessities of Union

We believe that union of His people is God's will and that every fact of experience points to the need of expressing that union in a visible form. We need not at this stage labour that point. But we need always in our negotiations to turn back to the main purpose of union; otherwise we are in danger of letting particular points assume too large an importance in our thoughts and perhaps even of strengthening and perpetuating division. For practically all the divisions which have occurred in the history of Christendom owe their origin to over-emphasis of particular things, occasioned, not infrequently, by a similar under-emphasis previously.

We must constantly, therefore, turn back to the fundamental conditions of the existence of the Church : and having found those consider what experience teaches us are the better ways of securing these. There may be and probably are different ways. We have to choose the one which best carries on our experience and which is most suitable to the life of the Church in the land in which we live.

I am going to be bold enough to set down some of the vital necessities for the existence of a Church and then proceed to discuss the proposed ways of preserving them in the South Indian Church, which is to be.

And first I put : the Revelation of God as a fact in history and an experience in life. Where that is denied or left in any doubt there can be

no true Church, for a main purpose of the Church is to witness by life and teaching to the Revelation of Himself which God has given to the world.

And so our Scheme begins with the Revelation of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit and the Revelation of God in Christ.

The Scheme places the Holy Scriptures in its foundation, for in them is contained the record of that Revelation, and that record has been tried and proved sufficient for many centuries. Nothing may be added as a necessity of belief, which cannot be proved from Scripture.

Further for purposes of teaching and of worship short summaries of the foundation truths on which the Church is founded are maintained in the Scheme; baptism in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; the Apostles' creed; the Nicene creed.

It is not claimed that the creeds are more than the statements they profess to be, born of experience, hammered out by earnest seekers after truth, corrected in the face of errors; the creeds which we have accepted are common to the whole Church (though the Greek Church has substituted the fuller 'Nicene' creed for the shorter Apostles' creed in its official formularies).

So much for the foundation record of the Revelation which the Church inherits. We turn now to the life of Christians, which is the aim and object of the revelation.

And we put in the forefront of it the faith by which every Christian must apprehend Christ. The Sacrament of Baptism was commanded by Christ Himself to bring every individual into His family. Each was personally to take his place as a child of God and to live in the power of that Spirit by which we say Abba, Father.

If the Sacrament of Baptism is individual to each child of God, the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, also commanded by Christ Himself, is both individual as each comes separately to the sacred feast, and social as it is the family feast in which together all unite to receive the Spirit of Christ, Who gave Himself for us; to unite as one holy brotherhood at His table; and to receive together, as we adore Him, His Spirit of love and service and to offer ourselves body, soul and spirit to Him.

The Sacraments then are the beginning of the teaching work of the Church, the God-appointed means by which its life is fostered and strengthened by the Spirit of God. Next in order comes the human teacher. From the first our Lord appointed men to learn from Him and to carry His salvation to others. The ministry of the Church has never failed. Passed on from generation to generation, the ministers of Christ's Church have been called by God, sustained by His Spirit, and proved by His blessing.

The ministers have a definite and a heavy responsibility in the church. They have been called by God to teach and to care for His people. They have been ordained by His Church to do their work in the Church. They are to receive the varied gifts of the Holy Spirit, suited to the many varieties of service which are required for the growth and the sustaining of the Body of Christ. They are responsible to God and to His Church to pass on the knowledge of the Revelation of God, which they have received. They are to be channels of life to those among whom they work. They have to lead the worship of God's people; they have to encourage and help the faithful, and to warn the sinful; they have the sad duty of warning off those who by wicked lives or perverse teaching, corrupt and mislead the children of God.

But the ministry exists for the Church not the Church for the ministry. The Church of God is the whole body of the children of God. They are the temple of His Holy Spirit; they are the Body of Christ, which reveals the Spirit of Christ and carries out His work in the world. They have a tremendous responsibility in the world. For it is from their lives that Christ will be judged in the world; it is they who by their good works will cause men to glorify their Father in heaven. Each has his place and his function in Christ's plan. All have not the same function; from them God calls some to be missionaries, some to be pastors, some to be teachers, some to be healers, some to rule, some to help. There are thousands of vocations, for all life belongs to God and with Him there is no 'sacred' and no 'secular' for the whole earth belongs to God. The rule of the body is differentiation of function so that the one body may do its work without gaps and failures, without confusion and without strife, and so it is with the Body of Christ. While all have their responsibility to live as the children of God, each has his special part to play in the family life. And it is this allotting of the parts that has been a constant cause of friction and division in the Body of Christ. It is to this that a great part of the Scheme for South India has to be devoted.

Let us look at the functions assigned to the ministry : first teaching and witnessing. They are responsible that the full truth revealed by God shall be given to His children. They may not add their own inventions to that revelation and they may not curtail it. They are examined and proved; they are required to make solemn promises; if they fail by error or self-will they must be corrected. All this is familiar to us all and it is provided for in the Scheme.

Then there is the pastoral care of God's children. The ministers are pastors and teachers; they have to visit the homes of their people, to guide and to counsel them—above all to pray with them and for them. They have to lead the young into the life of God; they have to warn the sinner; they have to assure the doubting penitent of God's pardon for sin and set him

free from the trammels of clinging evil. They have to protect their flock from evil-doers and corrupt teachers and in the last resort such persons have to be warned that they have forfeited their place in God's family.

All this and much more is required of the pastors of Christ's flock. And no man dares to take this office to himself. He must be called by God, who alone gives the grace needed; he must be commissioned by the Church, on behalf of which he does the work, and this is provided for in the Scheme.

The pastoral and teaching ministries are not the only forms of life in the church. There is the evangelist, the doctor, the nurse, the educationist, the steward of finance, the counsellor, and many another helper. The Body has many members. Each has its special duty and there should be no confusion and no quarrelling among them. And so the Scheme endeavours to assign functions in the Body, drawing on the experience of the past; the lay workers, the committees, in pastorate, district and diocese; all these are provided in the manner which experience tells us will *work*. We shall learn many new things in union for each will bring a different tradition. It is not wise to try to provide for every minute detail before we unite. Once united, the experience of all will enrich the common body. It may be that the Anglican Church (for instance) needs to learn more of the opportunities of lay work or that the Congregationalist can bring a fresher vision of the life and responsibilities of the whole body of believers; or again the Presbyterian system can shew us things which we have not realised concerning the training and responsibility of every ordained minister. These are commonplaces; but we need to take them seriously and not consider them merely a pious phrase in the Scheme. They ought to and they will mean a tremendous enrichment of the life of the Church after union.

There is not time nor space to write about details of the Scheme; I only plead that it be looked at in the light of its general purpose which is not to absorb other Churches into the framework that we have learned to love, but to provide an organisation in which these main purposes may be reasonably expected to be fulfilled.

But there are one or two considerations of a general nature which I would like to put forward before I close this overlong article. The Church is not man's creation; it is God's building; it is Christ's Body. It looks back to Christ, Who lived and died and rose for us and it looks forward to the revelation of the glorified Christ and the fulfilment of His loving purposes. It has been fashioned through many centuries by the Spirit of God and it has made many false steps which it has had to retrace. But we cannot abandon our history; it is not only our history; it is a revelation of the working of God. Some may fear that the Anglicans (for instance) lay too much stress on historicity. Perhaps they may lay too much; but there is security in building on old foundations. The oak lasts longer than the cork tree.

History is littered with the stories of movements which rose from nothing and went to nothing. God's plans are eternal and we have to let ourselves be moulded in them. All this however is not to say that we are to be bound to the dead past. St. Paul in his day was a 'dangerous' innovator but he built according to God's plans and his work has lasted. And there have been many like builders since. There is no century of which it can be said that in it was revealed the perfected building. And so each in his generation must build his part of God's temple on the foundation of Christ and of His Apostles but never apart from that. That is the true 'historic' Church. It is for the preservation of the treasures of the past that Anglicans seek to preserve the historic ministry; it is not that they deny God's evident grace granted to other parts of the Body. By their fruits we know them. We cannot deny them. But Anglicans do say that it is of the utmost value to carry on, as far as we can, the orderly succession of the teaching and pastoral ministry. It provides a security for unity; it gives strength to doubting workers, who realise that they belong to a great line of teachers called by God; it guards the Church against sudden divisions and internecine quarrels; it provides that things shall be done 'decently and in order'. But we dare not and do not claim that God cannot and does not work in other ways.

We do believe that this ministry rooted in the past is such a security to the Church that we dare not give up the system. We are not claiming that there can be exclusive channels of grace or the magic passing on of gifts. We simply try to follow the custom handed down to us, primarily as a safeguard of union and security for the future. And that is why we ask for the historic episcopate, not for theories about it but as a fact of experience and a safeguard of truth and unity.

They that compare themselves with themselves are not wise—says St. Paul. If we believe that God's Spirit works in every member of His Body, we shall not be troubled about equality of ministries or any other form of equality. God's work is all equal and all spiritual. If any member seem to be weaker, we give it more abundant honour, says St. Paul again. But there are still different functions in the Body and we shall not say that this or that function is greater or less where the Spirit of God is working. He is greatest who serves, is Christ's solution. And no one seeing the Spirit of God in any member dare use the words 'greater' or 'less'.

That there may be safer or more effective *methods of work* is obvious. These we can and must discuss, if we are to carry out God's plan. But no one dares to say that any man is indispensable to God; or that God can only work in this way or that.

December 10, 1933. HARRY MADRAS.

The South India Proposed Scheme of Church Union

By JOHN J. BANNINGA, D.D., Pasumalai, S. India

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The Full Spiritual Equality and Value of the Ministries of the Three Uniting Churches

Should this be asked for? Should this be granted?

These are old questions in a new form. The question of the Ministry and its commission, its status, its functions, has been the most serious problem before the Joint Committee in South India which is trying to frame the Scheme on which the Southern dioceses of the Church of India, Burma and Ceylon, the South India Synod of the Methodist (Wesleyan) Church, and the South India United Church can unite. The solution that has been sought all along has been that of a principle on which all could stand. The solution must, therefore, find room for the man on the extreme right wing who holds that Christ commissioned an apostolic priesthood authorized by Him to be His special representatives in the Church He established and empowered them to carry forward that commission to their successors, without which ministry the Church could not function as the Body of Christ. This principle must also meet the wishes of the man on the extreme left who holds that the Church is a voluntary Society of those who love their Lord authorized at any time and in any place by the ever present Christ to carry on His work of redeeming mankind and empowered by the living Christ to give to those so associated and to the world around them the Gospel Message and means of grace which Christ intends them to have.

The South India Joint Committee has often felt certain that it had found the solution. After days of prayer and careful thought what seemed to be the right solution would be worked out by them, but when this was presented to the Churches, it was found that they could not accept the suggestion and hence the question came back again to the Joint Committee. Sometimes though the Churches in South India seemed to be fairly well satisfied with the solution suggested, individuals or groups of individuals outside of the area of union have pointed out flaws or weaknesses in the solution and these have again necessitated a redrafting of the matter. Thus again and again the Committee has tried both by the statement of principles and the drafting of practical measures to meet the situation, but the final solution that all can unanimously accept has evidently not yet been found.

Even now not a few members of the Joint Committee, as well as many outside of that Committee, feel that the Committee has stated the principles and has indicated some of the implications and that therefore nothing further is needed. Others, however, feel, especially in view of the Pledge and the explanations given of it in certain quarters, that some have evidently not understood the Scheme as being a plan whereby equal partners in an enterprise would unite in carrying out its purposes. Hence they desire to have matters made more explicit, rather than being merely implicit.

I. ACTION OF THE S.I.U.C. ASSEMBLY.

The General Assembly of the S.I.U.C. met in Calicut, South India, from September 27 to October 2. The most important item on its agenda was the consideration of the Church Union Movement. Its own Committee had met for a day before the Assembly meetings began and the Assembly itself considered its Committee's report for a day and a half during its sessions. Hence most careful thought and prayer was given to the consideration of this matter.

The Assembly had before it the action of three Church Councils. The Telugu Council, which is composed of churches founded through the missionaries of the London Missionary Society in and around such centres as Gooty, Cuddapah and Jammalamadagu, had the Proposed Scheme of Union before it for several years. The Council had definitely postponed any decision for two or three years with the deliberate intention of giving further study and, if possible, final approval to the Scheme. In its meeting of July, 1933, however, the Counil drafted a minute on the subject, the conclusion of which was that the Council could not under the present circumstances give approval to the Scheme. Nay, they went further and said that unless the Scheme was materially modified and the validity of their ministry was recognised and intercommunion established, they must ask for the cessation of all negotiations.

The North Tamil Council, which is also composed of churches founded through the missionaries of the London Missionary Society, did not go the length that the Telugu Council had gone, but said that they would be able to give 'general approval' to the Scheme if the 'spiritual validity' of the ministry was recognised. The North Tamil Council has all along been in real sympathy with the efforts at union and several of its members have been very active participants in the Joint Committee work. They did feel, however, that unless the spiritual value of their ministry was recognised the result would be that there would be an inequality in the ministry in the Church after union which would decidedly interfere with the highest spiritual good of the Church.

On the other hand the Madura Church Council, which is composed of churches founded by the workers of the American Board of Boston, voted

most heartily in favour of the the Proposed Scheme as it now stands and urged the General Assembly and all its Councils to accept that Scheme and to enter into the Union as speedily as possible. The Madura Church Council has always laid greater emphasis upon brotherhood and spiritual values than it has upon the recognition of any external marks of either the ministry or the membership of the Church.

The Committee on Union appointed by the S.I.U.C. had these actions before it when it met and after prolonged discussion and consideration drafted a report which was presented to the General Assembly and, with some verbal modifications, was finally accepted with only one dissentient vote. It was perfectly evident from the discussion as well as from the final vote that there was great eagerness on the part of the Assembly to get on with the Movement and to bring the Church of South India into existence as soon as possible. No discussion on any question that has ever taken place in the General Assembly has been a higher quality or of a deeper earnestness than this debate in this year's Assembly. Both laymen and clergy indicated that they wanted Church Union. The opposition that came to the Proposed Scheme, as it now stands, did not arise in the minds of the Indian delegates who almost to a man, voiced the need of Union and the desire to bring it about as soon as possible.

The essential resolution passed by the General Assembly is as follows :—

'In view of the changes that have been made in the Scheme of Union, the Assembly is glad to find itself in a position to express general approval of the Scheme as published in January of this year. In giving this general approval the Assembly regards the Scheme as involving the acceptance by the uniting Churches of the two principles, viz., (1) the value of a constitutional episcopacy which maintains continuity with the past, and (2) the full spiritual equality and value of the ministries of the three uniting Churches.'

The meaning of this resolution ought to be perfectly evident to every one, not only in what it says, but in also in what it does not say. The wording was selected with great care and the framers of the resolution, as well as the members of the Assembly as a whole, think they understand all that is involved. It is true, of course, that it frequently happens that even men of ability do not realise fully all that has been said by the words they utter, or the full implications thereof, and perhaps even more frequently the things that are not meant by their statement. It might be well, therefore, to point out that the Assembly in adopting this resolution definitely and of set purpose omitted the mention of the words 'validity' and 'regularity'.

These technical words have been used for many generations if not centuries and yet there seems to be no agreement as to what they actually mean. The word 'validity' has usually been taken to mean the idea that a ministry

is what it ought to be if it carries out the full intention and commission of Jesus Christ Himself. But almost all denominations if not all individual scholars add details to such a general definition so that there is, by no means, a unanimous agreement as to what 'validity' means and does not mean. This is evident from the fact that so many denominations do not admit the validity of the ministry of other denominations. That failure to recognise this may be due not to a difference in forms and matter in the ordination or consecration but may also contain considerable details of theological thought and creedal statement.

Much the same is true of 'regularity' though here every one admits that we are dealing with externals of ordination rather than with any internal intentions of Jesus Christ and consequently 'regularity' is not regarded as so important as 'validity'.

A higher thought, however, arises. That thought does not deal with any expression in words or with methods dealing with forms. But it deals wholly and solely with spiritual things. All must recognise that if a ministry should be judged by spiritual things it raises the problem to a much higher level than the level on which much of past discussion has taken place. We may ask ourselves two questions. 'Can and does the ministry of a given Church show by its life and conduct that it is actually carrying out the great purpose of Christ?' 'Does a particular ministry conform to our conceptions of the outward acts of ordination and of function that men think Christ intended that the Ministry should have?' The former would surely reveal the higher spiritual character of the ministry.

The Rt. Rev. E. J. Palmer, D.D., formerly of Bombay, expresses that thought very forcibly in an article which appeared in *The Times* of London and other papers in December, 1932, and January, 1933, when he says :—

'The acid test of a Church's life is whether it does convert pagans at home or abroad. The Non-Episcopal Churches have (to our knowledge) done as much of this as the Episcopal.'

This is practically applying the criterion of Christ to the problem, when He said 'By their fruits ye shall know them', which means, when applied to the Christian ministry, that that ministry must be judged by the results of its labours rather than by the methods by which it was created.

In *The Church Times* of a few years ago a correspondent spoke of the exaltation that he felt when he realised that his ordination was certified by the fact that a Bishop, who was in contact with Christ Himself through the laying on of hands of a hundred bishops and an apostle commissioned by Christ Himself, had laid hand on his head and said that he felt that such an ordination did indeed give one the power to do what Christ intended that he should do. Those who have not had this experience of having a bishop in such a

succession lay hands upon their heads perhaps cannot appreciate all that that act may mean. But they probably will doubt very much whether the act of such a bishop in such a succession is of any greater spiritual value than the realisation that when the hands of clergy in ordination were laid upon their heads Christ was actually present and took part in the ceremony. To such an ordinand Christ is not separated from him by a hundred bishops and an apostle but is immediately present with all His power. Hence to him his ordination is not a question of validity according to any Church laws but is a spiritual experience of the highest importance.

To the non-episcopal ministers who are planning to go into this Union in South India the great question, therefore, is not whether the validity and regularity of the method of their ordination is recognised, but rather whether they have the spiritual power that is necessary for the work before them. They are not keen that men should say 'We accept your ministry as equally valid with ours'. They are terribly in earnest that they should be like salt that will savour everything with which it comes in contact. The salt may itself be dissolved and lost, but the life that it has contributed will have changed the whole mass. The Church of South India, as it will be after union, will not need, therefore, the recognition of other Churches on technical points nearly so much as it will need power to convert pagans within or without its organization.

With some such understanding the General Assembly has asked its Committee on Union to present this matter to the Joint Committee and to ask them to insert in the Basis of Union some statement embodying this great principle. The Assembly believes that in asking for this statement it is simply carrying one step further its emphasis upon spiritual things rather than upon technicalities.

II. CAN THE JOINT COMMITTEE GRANT THIS REQUEST?

The membership of the Joint Committee consists of fifteen representatives from each of the three Churches that are discussing union. As is already known these include four dioceses of the Church of India, Burma and Ceylon which is the continuation of the Church of England in this territory. It also includes what is now called the Methodist Church, formerly the Wesleyan, which consists of four districts of the South India Provincial Synod of that Church. The third member in these discussions is the S.I.U.C. which was itself formed in 1908 out of Presbyterian and Congregational elements at work in South India and which was later joined by the Malabar District of the Basel Mission which includes Christians of Swiss and South German Reformed and Lutheran traditions.

It will be seen at once, of course, that there is such a variety of opinion represented in this Committee that no simple wording of a principle can

be easily adopted that would suit all. On the Committee there will be men who hold fairly high ideas of the ministry and sacraments and the Church, and who believe most thoroughly in the historic episcopate if not in the doctrine of apostolic succession. It should be understood that here in South India there has always been a clear distinction between the 'historic episcopate' and 'apostolic succession'. The Joint Committee as such has never expressed itself in any way as accepting the theory of apostolic succession. Probably every member of the Committee would reject that doctrine as held by the extreme High-churchman. The Committee as such, however, has accepted the wording 'historic episcopate'. The S.I.U.C. has appended a note to the Proposed Scheme showing the meaning with which it adopts this wording. There is, therefore, in the Joint Committee no thought whatever that the idea of the doctrine of apostolic succession is accepted by that Committee in any sense whatever, though it is also undoubtedly true that individual members of the Church after union may hold that doctrine if they so wish; but neither that nor any other particular doctrine regarding the episcopate will become the official doctrine of the Church. Hence it is a real question as to whether the Joint Committee as a whole can come to a definite agreement with reference to this question.

There are undoubtedly a great many most sincere and able Christians in the Church of England who could not possibly accept any suggestion that the validity or regularity of non-episcopal clergy should be recognised. The question remains, however, whether they can recognise *the spiritual value* of non-episcopal ministries. The question might well be asked for instance, whether Bishop Gore could have accepted this? He certainly was a very strong supporter of the apostolic ministry as it had come down to present times through the regular channels of the Church with an unbroken succession, as he believed, from apostolic times. The question may well be asked, however, whether even a saint and scholar like Bishop Gore could be made the final judge in a case of this kind. For it is psychologically true that a man who has firmly held a certain position from his youth through more than forty years of active life cannot easily change his mind even though faced with genuine facts. It is also undoubtedly true that there are sufficient differences of temperament which make it very difficult for some men to accept what seems to be perfectly clear to others. Undoubtedly the Editor of *The Church Times* will see in any suggestion of the recognition of the spiritual value of the ministry of non-episcopal Churches an evidence of disloyalty to Jesus Christ and no doubt eminent Churchmen will follow him in that conception. They have so long and so intently looked at a particular point of light that their eyes are blind to everything else.

There are, however, a multitude of men in the Church of England as well as in other Churches who have learnt in recent years that the argument on which the doctrine of apostolic succession rests is no longer

tenable. To be able to hold such a doctrine there should be indisputable evidence and every one must admit that that is completely lacking. In his book *The Case for Episcopacy*, Kenneth D. Mackenzie tries to give the Scriptural evidence, but when one reads his argument he becomes very conscious of the too frequent use of such words as 'apparently', 'no great difficulty', 'we assume', 'shall we say', 'a little thought seems to show', 'a recognition of something', 'not to be supposed', 'seem to have differed', 'a priori', 'it is most improbable', 'so far as we know', 'no reason to suppose', etc. etc. The whole argument is based upon supposition and assumption. Consequently one who bases his conclusions upon proven facts must admit that the case for apostolic succession with its idea of communicated grace is not tenable.

This is, of course, at once evident when one reads the writings of such Anglican scholars as Dr. Headlam, Dr. Palmer, Dr. Guy Rogers and Dr. Streeter. They admit that the evidence is lacking and consequently they do not hold a doctrine that is dependent upon unproven arguments.

Dr. Headlam in his book *The Doctrine of the Church and Reunion* frankly pleads for the acceptance of the validity of the non-episcopal ministry. He says on page 268,—

'Quite correctly and sincerely the Reformers aimed in their Sacraments and ministry at fulfilling the will of Christ. They did what He commanded. Their intention was to do what He had done. I believe, therefore, that in all those bodies which solemnly appoint their ministers by laying on of hands and prayer, and celebrate the Sacraments in accordance with our Lord's commands, the Orders and Sacraments are valid.'

He adds on the next page,—

'Two things, then, are essential in the cause of reunion. The first is the fullest and freest recognition as a condition of reunion of the Orders and Sacraments of all those who have been ordained in accordance with the Apostolic rule with prayer and laying on of hands, and who have celebrated the Sacraments according to the command of our Lord.'

The conclusions of Dr. Streeter are set forth in his book on the *Primitive Church* where he has minutely examined the evidence of the early centuries and has clearly shown that no exclusive doctrine of the ministry can be established. That almost all forms of the ministry seemed to be practised in the first century seems to be evident, but whatever may have been the development after the second century there certainly was not any uniform, exclusive practice prevailing in apostolic times that must of necessity be followed today.

In dealing with this whole question of validity there is perhaps no better book than one which now probably would be considered out of date.

I refer to Dr. Charles A. Briggs's *Church Unity* with the sub-title 'Studies of its most important problems'. This book was written in 1909 and published by the author at that time. Dr. Briggs was an eminent Presbyterian scholar who, because of attacks on his position with reference to Biblical criticism, left the Presbyterian Church and joined the Protestant Episcopal Church of America. He, however, continued his work as a teacher in Union Theological Seminary, New York. This book was written even before the Edinburgh Conference was held after which the present World Movement for Union was started under the influence and inspiration of Bishop Brent. In this volume Dr. Briggs studies the whole question of Church Union with a breadth of mind and with a depth of sympathy which is extraordinary and illuminating. All who are interested in this question of union should study this book carefully. If we all did, we would probably get together much more easily, for Dr. Briggs shows not only the facts of the case but also shows the tremendous advantage there would be in having each Church bring into the united Church the best gifts that it has to bestow. Dr. Briggs accepts an episcopal ministry as a necessary item in union. But he would not admit any exclusive or limiting doctrine to bind that ministry.

Whatever else may be said concerning the ministry today it undoubtedly becomes absolutely necessary, if there is to be any Church Union, that this union must rest upon a comprehensive and an inclusive conception rather than upon an exclusive and limiting idea of the ministry.

We believe that that is the attitude of most scholars today. We believe that the mind of the Church as a whole throughout the world is coming closer and closer to that ideal. While there must continue to be a tremendous emphasis upon faith and orderliness there is also coming to be even a stronger emphasis upon spiritual things, and men are beginning to realise that it does not matter so much through what channel the Water of Life comes as long as it quickens and restores the sinful soul. The fact that the soul is restored and given new life is an evidence that the Water of Life is there and that it comes straight from its source in Jesus Christ. Consequently no man may say 'He is not one of us and therefore he shall not be recognised as a channel through whom God's grace can flow'.

III. THE DANGERS OF FAILURE

The question may well arise as to what will happen if finally there can be no agreement in the Committee on Union with reference to this or any other important question. The Joint Committee in South India has now been at work for more than fourteen years. The meeting at which this movement started was held at Tranquebar in May, 1909, under the inspiring leadership of Bishop Azariah and the Rev. V. Santiago. Throughout these years there has been a very careful study of all the problems involved and a very sincere attempt to solve them. The circumstances under which this

movement has been going forward are peculiarly favourable for a successful issue of the movement. The people who form the membership of the three Churches concerned all belong to the Dravidian race of South India and, though they speak different languages, those languages are cognate. On the whole the customs and traditions of the people are a common possession. Missionary Societies that have worked among them, while differing both in history and in practice, are nevertheless not representatives of the extreme wings of these Churches, even though historically they may have held different theories living and working together here in South India has modified these characteristics and rubbed off many of their sharp edges. The hill stations, to which the missionaries went, and the conferences and conventions among the Indian Christians themselves, have been mighty influences for brotherhood and fellowship. In recent years there has been a great intermingling of the Christians whose forefathers became members of particular Churches. Inasmuch as the great problems of the Reformation have never been real problems to them, these Indian Christians have never felt the exclusiveness that is natural to those in Western climes. The Church in South India comes nearer to being an apostolic Church than any Church in Europe or America has been for centuries. What divisions there may be in South India today are more like those in Corinth, which were due to personal leadership, than they are to abstract doctrines or principles. The Christian in South India is not an 'independent' but is rather a brother, and consequently union is possible here where it may not as yet be anywhere near possible in other places.

It is, of course, true that some men will have to change their minds before they can unite with other men who have not changed their minds. No man that holds an exclusive conception of the Kingdom of Christ can heartily unite with another man who holds an equally exclusive opinion based on another theory. Both of these will have to change their minds and accept the broadness of Christ's own conceptions. He said 'He that is not against us is for us. Let him alone'. Perhaps we would have Christ go a step further and say 'Bring in that man into our band'. But Christ was not as yet forming a Church. When the Spirit came at Pentecost we find no tendency on the part of any of the apostles to exclude anyone from their fellowship except for definite sin.

But what if the South India Scheme fails? We cannot do better than quote the words of an eminent preacher who recently toured in South India and who spoke in his lecture about the League of Nations. He said 'Destroy the League today and tomorrow you will have to organize a similar body in order to carry on the work that it is doing'. After the lecture his attention was called to the fact that a similar condition existed here in South India with reference to Church Union. If the present Union in South India fails a similar organization will have to be set up to accomplish the

end desired or the whole movement of Church Union will be set back by fifty if not one hundred years. When the lecturer saw this point, he said 'You are absolutely right. You must go forward with your movement and bring this united Church into existence.'

We do not know why God in His providence chose South India as the place where this movement should be carried forward as far as it has been. There undoubtedly are other places where there are more scholars and where there are greater saints and where there are more Churches represented. But God has always been in the habit of choosing the little things of this world to carry out His purposes and it would almost seem to be His thought that in this matter also the work should be done under the guidance of His Spirit by those who are not known to the world, but who are honestly and sincerely trying to find the will of God. If this movement fails, the cause will be set back by many decades. If on the other hand it succeeds it will furnish an impetus and inspiration to multitudes of others on all the Continents in the world and may become the beginning of that general movement which will again give us One, Holy, Apostolic, Church.

Marriage Law in the United Church

This subject is one of those to be discussed at the next meeting of the Joint Committee, and a sub-committee has been appointed to prepare proposals for provisions which should be inserted in the constitution. The purpose of this article is to indicate some of the questions which will have to be dealt with.

1. *Necessity for a Marriage Law of the United Church.*—Christian marriages in India are governed by the Indian Christian Marriage Act. The National Christian Council has for a number of years been preparing proposals for a revision of this Act, but it now appears that owing to the preoccupation of the Government with constitutional changes, they will not be able to take up this question for several years. Hence the different Churches in India must take action for themselves on various points which might have been provided for in the proposed revision of the Indian Christian Marriage Act, if their rules do not at present provide for those points; and since the United Church will be from the legal point of view a new Christian body, it will be necessary for it to state clearly what its laws are on certain points.

Further, it seems probable that since the United Church will have the rule of episcopal ordination, it will come under the section of the Indian Christian Marriage Act, which provides that marriages in such a Church must be solemnized 'according to the rules, rites, ceremonies and customs' of that Church. On this ground therefore also it will be necessary for the United Church to state definitely what its rules and customs are, since they will then be accepted as governing marriages in the United Church in the same way that the rules of the Anglican Church are accepted by the law as governing marriages in that Church.

2. What should be the *Minimum Age of Marriage* permitted in the United Church, and what should be the *prohibited degrees* of consanguinity and affinity? At present customs somewhat vary, particularly with regard to the latter point, e.g., in the Anglican Church ministers are not permitted to solemnize the marriage of a man with his deceased wife's sister. Again, in some of the Churches the marriage of a man with his sister's daughter is strictly prohibited and if such a marriage is made by a Church member before a registrar, Church discipline is exercised; in others, while this marriage is strongly discouraged, it is not definitely forbidden.

3. *Marriage of Divorced Persons.*—The rules of the Churches differ on this point; is it necessary that the law of the United Church should be uniform or can different dioceses be permitted to have different rules and customs in the matter?

4. Marriages of *Christians with non-Christians* and marriages between *Christians which are performed by Hindu rites* or in an irregular manner, are also points which need consideration.

5. What rules and standards will the Church lay down as regards the exercising of *Church discipline* on those who make marriages which are not according to the law of the Church? Can there be varieties of use in the Church in this matter?

6. What is to be laid down with regard to the essential elements of the *Marriage Service*, and is, e.g., the central part of that service to be laid down for the whole Church?

The above will suffice as an indication of matters which must be considered by the Joint Committee. It is hoped that both members of the Joint Committee and others will give consideration to these matters before the meeting of the Joint Committee. Discussions by local groups on some of these points may also be profitable and helpful.

BISHOPSTOWE, FREDERICK TINNEVELLY.

13-12-1933.

'Partners in the Gospel'

The article entitled, 'Partners in the Gospel', as it appears in the last number of *Church Union News and Views*, coming from the pen of the Bishop of Madras, raises the debate concerning Church Union in South India to a level far beyond controversy. There is hardly anything in what the Bishop explicitly says to which one could take reasonable objection. There could be no greater appeal than that for Union.

But the one question that comes uppermost to my mind as I give thought to the article is, 'Where does Episcopacy come in here?' I am not able to understand why in order to be 'Partners in the Gospel' it should be made incumbent on the Free Churches to accept Episcopacy. Perhaps it is a foregone conclusion that Union could only be achieved on the basis of Episcopacy and therefore the Bishop felt it unnecessary to go over the ground that has already been traversed. Nevertheless to me it still remains enigmatic how the mere acceptance of Episcopacy could make the ministers of the non-episcopal Churches qualified for this 'partnership' of which the Bishop speaks, if they are not worthy of it apart from Episcopacy. If the Union, which the Bishop with many others would like to see accomplished in South India is 'co-operation of all', 'pooling of the gifts of God', and 'putting our all at the disposal of all', why is it that Episcopacy alone, above every other form of Church Government, should loom large in the Scheme as an indispensable factor in the basis of Union?

In these 'consultations' (I prefer this word to 'negotiations' to keep ourselves reminded of what has been said time and oft in our Synods and Provincial Synods, and perhaps in the Joint and other Committees also, that we are not committing ourselves to anything by these 'consultations' from which, if circumstances so required it of us, we could still feel free to withdraw ourselves, at any moment, however far we might have gone in our deliberations on the matter) three Churches in South India are represented, of which only one is Episcopal, while to the other two Episcopacy is either foreign or alien. The sacerdotal element in Episcopacy is something which the two Churches have grown to look upon with suspicion and that not without reason. This being the case, it is nothing less than make-believe to say that the three elements, Episcopal, Congregational and Presbyterian have been given equal and due prominence in the Scheme when Episcopacy, which is found in neither of the two Churches but which is, on the other hand, essentially Anglican, is so singled out to dominate all the others that it becomes the ruling feature in the basis of Union. The fact that Episcopacy is a departure from the existing order, as far as the two Free Churches are concerned, makes it obvious that in 'pooling their all' the Anglican 'ALL' is so overwhelming and predominant

that the Presbyterian and Congregational elements instead of being contributions to a 'comprehensive union' are swallowed up to the extent of losing their very identity. In fine the Union which the Scheme proposes is nothing less than 'absorption of the two Churches by the one', for, the resultant Church, the so-called 'United Church', is in very surety an Episcopal Church.

It may be pointed out that the Episcopacy which the Scheme proposes for the basis of Union, though 'historic', is constitutional in form. But what does this mean in practice when the same Scheme declares that this 'acceptance of the historic episcopate in a constitutional form does not bind the United Church to any particular theory concerning Episcopacy or concerning orders of the Ministry'? Though the interpretation of the term 'historic' episcopate by the South India United Church leaves little room for ambiguity, it must be remembered that it is the interpretation of that particular body. The nature of the above declaration is such that it does not permit the United Church to lay any general or particular interpretation on that term, while the Churches of Anglican Communion are not prevented from interpreting it in a way conducive to their traditions, even to the extent of continuing to cherish their pet theory of Apostolic Succession as one of the implications of the term.

Some one has said in this connection that 'these good people' who are afraid lest the Scheme should lead the United Church into the vortex of sacerdotalism 'are suffering from an inferiority complex' and sets about to solve the complex by predicting a future for the United Church in which she might shape herself into a form which, whether Episcopal or non-episcopal, would be most suited to the genius of the Indian people. For such a golden future as that why should we now adopt a measure which is neither Indian nor is quite acceptable to all the people called Christians in South India? Let us patiently wait for the day when Indians can themselves, without any pressure from outside forces, come together to evolve a Church most suited to their tastes and temperaments, a Church which would nurture them in all that is best toward 'reaching maturity, reaching the full measure of development which belongs to the fulness of Christ.'

Episcopacy, it is said, is chosen to be the ruling feature in the basis of Union as it appeals most to the Indian mind. This is another pill which is hard to swallow! If there is anything that comes nearest to the Hindu ideal of Priestcraft it is what we find in Roman Catholicism. The term 'Swami or Swamula Varu', which is commonly used in addressing an Indian Guru, is faithfully retained in the Roman Catholic Church, and in my opinion the only Christian Dignitary to whom the appellation 'Jagad Guru' can aptly be applied is none other than the Pope, for while there are Bishops numerous, and Archbishops many, the Pope is the only ecclesiastic who has no second. He stands unique. Should we allow ourselves to be guided

merely by external resemblances, we would do well to turn our eyes to the Roman Church in which we can easily discern, as far as outward symbols and paraphernalia are concerned, things that come nearest to the mind of Religious India. But that is far from the ideal that we are striving after. Even the Episcopacy proposed by the Scheme is neither oriental nor is it altogether occidental. It is something which cannot be subjected to definition or interpretation!

The vagueness enshrouding the term 'historic' and the implications it is capable of bearing make the situation more shady when it is affirmed that 'continuity with the historic episcopate shall both be initially and thereafter be effectively maintained, it being understood that no particular interpretation of the fact of historic episcopate is thereby implied or shall be demanded from any minister or member of the United Church.' Anything so elastic and ill-defined cannot but engender suspicion in the minds of the people, especially when it pertains to a determining factor in Union deliberations.

The observations made by the Bishop of Dornakal on certain vital matters in the Calcutta Resolutions state in language unequivocal

1. 'that the ministries of other Christian bodies at present in separation from the Anglican body are not (in the estimation of this body) of equal certain validity or identical with those of the Churches which have retained the succession of Bishops';

2. that even after the glorious achievement of 'a limited intercommunion between the delegates of the negotiating bodies' the Anglicans 'ought not to be interpreted as having accepted any theory of equal validity of the theory of identity' of all non-episcopal ministries;

3. and that even after Union 'every honest endeavour shall be made that to no former Anglican congregation shall a non-episcopal minister be appointed or be sent'.

I seem to gather from these explanations of the Bishop that the 'Historic Episcopate' which the Anglicans demand 'as one of the fundamental Basis of Union' in their sense is different from what the Scheme tries to explain it to mean by watering it down to a colourless and effete form.

I can understand the non-episcopal ministries not being identical with the episcopal ministries but what it is that is found wanting in the former so as to render them not to be of equal validity with the latter is beyond my comprehension.

Is it not a standing disgrace to the Christian Church as it is that the non-episcopal ministries should be looked down upon as being not valid to sustain comparison with those of the Anglican Church, and need this humiliation be brought into yet bolder relief under the psuedonym of Union?

It is this uncharitable attitude of one denomination toward the other that is subjecting the Churches in India to the censure of the non-Christian. We bolster up our differences as though they are the be-all and end-all of our Faith and cling to them with such fanatic ardour and lack of generosity to one another that we let them prevent us from being 'Partners in the Gospel'.

Let us be 'Partners in the Gospel' by all means, but I really cannot see why to be such 'Partners' the non-episcopal Churches should concede to Episcopacy. If in Christ we cannot come to be 'Partners in His Gospel', Episcopacy is too frail a frame to hold us together.

What has Episcopacy or any other order of Ministry to do with the Union that we want to have with one another? The Church if it is compared with the body, it is the Body of Christ, and not of Episcopacy or Presbyterianism or Congregationalism. If we think of it in terms of a building, then its foundation is Christ and not any form of Church Government. If Christ is not sufficient to be the basis, the only basis of Union, every other basis is sinking sand. In laying so much stress on Episcopacy in the Scheme we are not only mixing up essentials with non-essentials—mixing them up hopelessly, of course—but are also giving undue prominence to the latter to the detriment of the former.

I therefore plead for spiritual unity of the Churches in India before we contemplate coming together into an organic union, which, if it is in the interests of the Kingdom of God, cannot be exclusively so for 'South India' alone, as the Methodist Conference seems to suggest. And to my mind we can never consider ourselves to be truly one in spirit until and unless intercommunion becomes not 'a limited affair between the delegates of the negotiating bodies'—though I cannot fail to give God thanks even for this indication of a forward move toward Union—but a settled practice among these Churches. When our Lord prayed that 'His disciples should be one' I think He had in His mind more this spiritual unity of His followers than any conception of an organised body of believers. The visible unity was in evidence in the meeting together, praying together and breaking of the bread together. Such unity must precede any talk of an organic union.

In Christ and Christ alone can the Churches in India be not only ONE, but also an entirely NEW CREATION.

E. L. ANANTA RAO

'PARTNERS IN THE GOSPEL'.

I have very carefully read Mr. Ananta Rao's paper, and have much sympathy with part of his paper, but the impression made on my mind by the paper as a whole is that Mr. Ananta Rao is fighting the words 'Episcopacy' and 'Episcopal', but not the facts for which they stand.

It is perfectly true that from the beginning of the consultations a 'constitutional episcopacy' was agreed upon. If this had not been accepted by the representatives of the three Churches, they would not have entered upon the negotiations. Mr. Ananta Rao himself is a member of the Joint Committee, and at one time he was quite prepared to accept episcopacy as the form of government of the united Church.

In episcopacy as such as there is no sacerdotal element. There are Churches governed by bishops where there is no trace of sacerdotalism. In those Churches episcopacy is not defined. The way to deal with the question is to take the office and work of the bishop as laid down in the proposed Scheme, and see whether one can make a theory from those facts. The result most probably would be that different persons would from the facts derive different theories. Why should they not? We cannot limit the thinking powers of members of the Church, or of the ministers. If I understand Mr. Ananta Rao aright, he wishes to have his own views on the question of the definition of episcopacy, but will not allow other persons to have theirs. All must have his definition. This is the beginning of intolerance. In the united Church there must be liberty of thought.

There must be some form of government in the Church. Apparently Mr. Ananta Rao objects to the form of episcopal government, but he gives no reasons. He is now working in a Church, which has a very definite form of Church government. The chief pastor in his Church is not called a 'bishop' but a 'chairman'. If Mr. Ananta Rao will ascertain the powers which his chairman has and compare them with the powers proposed to be given to bishops in the united Church, he will see that he is under a far more autocratic authority now than he will be if he becomes a minister in the united Church. Many who criticise the proposed Scheme will not study it carefully, and ascertain the facts. Certain words are not acceptable, and the whole is condemned. If we had the vernacular words for 'bishop' and 'episcopacy', the fears of many would vanish.

The suggestion is made that the question of union should be postponed till the Indian Church can deal with the matter 'without any pressure from outside sources'. That day is far distant, and meanwhile the Church is sadly suffering and hampered because of her divisions. These divisions have been caused, not by Indians, but by those missionaries from the West who brought the Gospel to India. My firm conviction is that we who have brought our divisions with us must help the Indian Church to get rid of them. The longer this is put off, the more difficult it will be. Churches are being organised on different Western lines, and when these have been stabilised, the task of uniting them will be greatly increased. Now is the time for action. There is a spirit of goodwill among the Churches; there is a growing desire for unity; and the sooner it can be accomplished the

better. The scandal of our divisions should be blotted out at the earliest opportunity. Delay in this matter will be highly dangerous.

Mr. Ananta Rao pleads for spiritual union, and here every one will most heartily agree with him. This pervades the whole Scheme. Without this, organic union will fail. If Mr. Ananta Rao will read page vii of the 'Foreword' to the Scheme, he will see how anxious all are to have this spiritual union. Let me quote a few words:—'Jesus Christ is the Person in Whom the Churches unite. His life and death and ever-living presence must be central in the thought, life and devotion of each member of the Church, as in that of the Church as a whole. His cross is the place of meeting'. If we meet here, we must have some kind of organisation to show our unity. The proposed Scheme has been prepared in an atmosphere of devotion, and while it is not perfect, it is the only plan that has so far commended itself to Christians in all parts of the world. Will not Mr. Ananta Rao join us in making it more acceptable to the Christians of South India, for whom it has been specially prepared?

H. GULLIFORD

How a Continental Looks at the Scheme of Union

When we confess the 'one holy catholic Church', we confess an article of faith. We believe something which is not seen and cannot be seen. The unity of the Church is the one Lord, the one word of God and the one faith in God's salvation in Christ. The riches and manifoldness of this Church cannot be expressed by any single visible church on earth. Hence the variety and diversity of churches, of which each is a member of the one Church which is the body of Christ. At the same time this diversity is the fruit of the imperfection and sinfulness of each visible church. The full unity cannot be secured by outward organization—it will come into existence when the Church meets her Lord coming again.

It is only when through the leading of the Spirit two or more churches are shown their inward unity acknowledging each other as full members of the one Church, that they are able to unite. The resulting Church will

then be not a composite picture, but a new creative unity, expressing the mind of Christ in greater clearness and receiving greater power. It is only the Holy Spirit that can do this.

From this angle I may try to answer the question put to me, what the Continental Churches can contribute to the South India Union question. For the present only the churches of the Basel Mission, which is itself a Union Mission, supported by Lutheran churches in South Germany and Reformed churches in Switzerland, are actively interested in the question. But soon other churches may also have to take up this question. Without going into the details of the Scheme, I wish to touch two points, where in my opinion the Continental churches can give a fruitful contribution.

1. It has been said that the Lausanne Conference dealt with Order rather than with Faith. The same danger seems to loom here too. Already the names episcopal, presbyterial, congregational seem to indicate that the differences among the English-speaking churches lie more along the lines of differentiation of church-government, than that they have to do with differences in doctrine. Thus the Scheme of Union is an admirable attempt to unite organically different forms of church-government. But the mere acceptance of the Scheme does not yet mean that the churches will be one also spiritually. Much time may be devoted to discussing technicalities of organization, while the same time deeper issues need not be touched at all. The Continental churches may be able to emphasize that these questions of order, though they have also their relative importance, are not the most essential ones. There are e.g. on the Continent Reformed churches with presbyterian constitution and such with episcopal constitution, which have full communion with each other, while this may not be the case with two presbyterian or two episcopal churches of different denomination, the doctrinal basis of which is different. The church is primarily a fellowship of faith, and can therefore respect different forms of order.

A good deal of the discussion has centred round the historic episcopate. On the Continent we have no quarrel with episcopacy. Several of the Lutheran churches of Germany have been episcopal for a long time, and now the United Church of Germany has given itself an episcopal constitution. In opposition to this Karl Barth in his recent publication 'Theologische Existenz heute' condemns 'real' episcopacy as incompatible with reformed principles. Under the 'real' bishop Barth understands the catholic bishop in his full ecclesiastical power as distinct from the bishop in the Swedish or Anglican churches. Thus a number of Reformed and Calvinistic churches have an episcopal constitution (Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania). This episcopacy has been throughout constitutional, the bishop being *primus inter pares* and often himself in charge of a parish, and thus it does not constitute

a dividing line against Reformed churches with different form of Government. Personally I believe that the episcopal form of Government is of great benefit, specially to growing churches. I also believe that the historic episcopate in its pre-Roman form, as defined recently by the S.I.U.C. is quite acceptable as far as only historical deductions are made from its historicity. As it seems that in the United Church every episcopal ordination is to be accepted, whether it comes from the historic line, or not, the solution to this question seems to go in the positive direction. Still I feel that the Scheme has not yet reached a truly œcumenical position, such as is held e.g. on the Continent by the Swedish Church, which, while having the historic episcopate itself, admits under certain conditions non-episcopally ordained ministers without re-ordination.

Unity of faith is not constituted by certain forms of order, nor can it be broken on account of differences of order. The over-emphasis of such constitutional points seems to lead to the danger of ecclesiasticism. Even the best organization of a church is no substitute for personal conversion. When the test of a ministry or of sacraments is not sought in the usefulness to the Kingdom of God and in the blessings that are received, but in certain forms of order, this danger is rather much in evidence. This may lead to dead uniformity rather than to a living spiritual union. The constant remembrance of our Lord's word that whosoever is not born from above cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven, will keep to the forefront the essential service of the church, viz. conversion and rebirth, and to the background the less important questions of order.

2. On the other hand the questions of Faith seem to be rather much in the background. It is true that in the Scheme the Bible has been accepted as ultimate standard of faith and that the first two œcumenical creeds have been added to witness to the doctrine of the Church. I believe that also the Roman Church could agree to this. This shows at once the very wide range of official teaching allowed in the Church. A church, in which at the same time (to mention only one thing) the principles of the Reformation can officially be upheld and cried down, may not be able to give much definite and effective teaching on essential points. Comprehensiveness is no solution for questions of faith. Each reformation has led back from comprehensiveness to simplicity and definiteness. I do not wish to be misunderstood as denying the freedom of conscience of the individual; I fully agree that within the one fellowship different views can and may be held. But what I am concerned with is the official teaching of the Church, which, though liberal in minor points, must not be uncertain and ambiguous in fundamentals. This point will specially become important in the question of theological education. The fact that e.g. Emil Brunner, one of the foremost Swiss theologians felt unable to continue his co-operation in the theological commission of the Lausanne Conference, is indicative that a policy

of extreme accommodation cannot be supported by a theologian with a clear doctrinal position and that very important questions still wait for their clarification.

A confession of faith cannot be manufactured. It must be given by the Spirit in answer in a concrete situation confronting the Church. It is not by chance that in the Lutheran churches in Germany the question of a definite confession of faith has become alive again in the hour of the external reorganisation of the Church (cf. the proposals of the Tecklenburg Synod). Also when the Basel Mission churches in India after their separation caused by the war united again last year, they felt the necessity of stating their common faith at the beginning of their constitution as the expression of what they stand for. Any fellowship of faith that is real, will be able to express its faith against confronting questions with definiteness and clearness. Because—as I have said above—it is only when the Spirit shows different churches their inward unity of faith, that they are able to be in fellowship also outwardly. Also in South India real union will not be established until the mind of the new resulting church can express itself unitedly in clear terms on questions of faith. This may not be possible all at once, but I fear, until this is reached, the contemplated union will at its best be artificial and incomplete. And a church without a clear message may easily fall a prey to the danger of syncretism. It is here that I feel that the Continental churches with their greater emphasis on matters of faith and doctrine can make a very definite contribution.

To sum up: the contribution which the Continental churches can make to this union movement, can be expressed as the heritage of the Reformation and the heritage of Pietism, on the one hand emphasising the necessity of a clear Biblical message and on the other hand emphasising the necessity of personal conversion and rebirth of every member. Not that these are fundamentally two messages independent of each other, but rather that through the second the original attitude of the Reformation towards the Word of God was restituted and supplemented. Over against this contribution, which they share with several other churches, they will be enriched by the other churches with gifts, which have been more in the background in their own life.

Calicut, S. India. A. STRECKEISEN.

The Methodist Conference and the Scheme

The debate on South Indian Church Union in the Methodist Conference in England in 1933 made it quite clear that some things in the scheme are viewed with serious misgiving by many in that assembly. The resolutions adopted by the Conference, which were published in the September issue of *News and Views*, do not exactly reflect the character of the debate, or the nature and extent of the misgivings. The Conference was not persuaded to adopt them without some difficulty. It did adopt them because of its profound interest in the whole question of Christian unity, and its reluctance to oppose or hinder so remarkable and promising a step in that direction as is contemplated in South India.

It believes, and has said so repeatedly, that 'organic union is in the interests of the Kingdom of God in South India'. Further the Conference has been deeply impressed by what it has been told of the blessing of God resting upon the deliberations, and especially upon the united worship, of the Joint Committee. Such experiences are closely akin to some of the deepest things in the history of Methodism. The relation of them by men who have passed through them could not but win a response from those who have so lately experienced something not dissimilar in the healing of the breaches in Methodism itself. There is in the Conference a pre-disposition to recognize and rejoice in such signs of the presence and leading of God.

Whence then the misgivings? Are we to understand that if the two points expressly referred to in the resolutions were settled according to the mind of the Conference all would be well? That is to say, would the Conference be satisfied to approve the scheme if it were agreed that in the united Church presbyters should always participate in the consecration of bishops, and if it were made clear that there will not be two kinds of ministers in that Church, some who can exercise their ministry anywhere, and others whose ministry must be limited to certain sections of the Church?

Or is there behind the mention of these two points something deeper and more far reaching, of which they are signals? Again, is it to be understood that hesitation about the scheme is felt in the Conference generally, or only by a minority? Has Methodist Union made a difference in some way adverse to the acceptance of the scheme? Is there less chance of a vote in its favour in the present large Conference than there would have been in the former sectional Conference?

Then, again, what is the meaning of the last resolution? Why is a delegate coming out? What is the purpose of his visit? Is it to learn, and report to the Conference; or is he bringing advices and instructions for his brethren in India?

A few words on these questions may help to make the position clear. To take the last point first.

It has sometimes happened in recent years that when the subject of Church Union has come before the Conference no missionary from South India with personal experience of the Joint Committee has happened to be on furlough and present at the Conference. Questions have been asked which no one present was able to answer; assumptions have been made which needed modification or correction; the debate has had to depend upon written or published communications from India which many of those present had had no opportunity of seeing.

When on the other hand such men as Mr. Gulliford or Mr. Monahan have been there they have been able to give the Conference much valuable information and sometimes to correct misapprehensions. In the course of last year's debate Mr. Posnett rendered a similar service to the Conference and to the cause of Union.

The suggestion was then made that a leading member of the Conference itself whose location is in England and who is usually present at its annual meetings, one whose judgment commands the respect of all, should come out to India to study the question on the spot, to confer with Methodists in India in their Synods and in personal conversation, to meet some of the leaders in the other Churches, and to be present, if possible, at a meeting of the Joint Committee. He would be able while in India to give us information as to the opinions and feelings of those in England whom he represents, and on his return to speak with some authority in the Conference and elsewhere on the position in India.

We in India were consulted about this, and heartily approved the suggestion, and the visit is being made on the unanimous invitation of the Standing Committee of the South India Provincial Synod. The choice has fallen upon Dr. W. F. Lofthouse, Principal of Handsworth College, Birmingham, an ex-President of the Wesleyan Conference, whose scholarship, whose writings in the field of Biblical and theological interpretation, and whose work on social questions of live interest are well known in all the Churches. Dr. Lofthouse is expected to arrive in India on the 4th of January and to spend some two and a half months visiting various parts of the country, conferring with those of his own and other Churches, and gathering impressions with which to return to England. He is sure of a most cordial welcome.

While his commission is of the general and indefinite character indicated above, Dr. Lofthouse is certain to watch with special care the matters about which the Conference desires more satisfaction than it has yet received. It was asked above whether the two points mentioned in the resolutions

should not be regarded as signals of a deep and general feeling, rather than as the only two points in the scheme about which the Conference has any doubt. It seems to the writer, and correspondence with friends in England supports his view, that this is the case.

In his September article Mr. Gulliford referred to the influence upon the Conference of the recent Anglo-Catholic celebrations in England, and especially of the service at Wembley. It must be remembered that while that was the event of a particular year it stands for something in the religious life of England which is potent and permanent. There are very many in England who unfortunately have no opportunity of knowing any other type of Anglicanism than an intolerant and exclusive sacerdotalism. Some of the Methodist preachers who come up to the Conference do their work from day to day in places where the parish priest resents their presence, denies all reality to their ministry, and instructs his people that to attend their services is sin. It is painful to have to refer to these things, but it is no use shutting our eyes to them, or imagining that they have ceased to exist. Those who are in daily contact with them cannot easily realise that there is a very different spirit elsewhere. They cannot easily conceive of a fellowship in which Methodists, Presbyterians and Congregationalists can join with Anglicans on terms of real brotherhood: still less can they conceive of their fusion into a single and truly united Church. Many ministers and laymen therefore can only come to the consideration of such a scheme as ours with a strong initial prejudice against it, and suspicion of what they may find in it.

But there are others more fortunate than these, and better acquainted with other types of religious thought and life, who still have their misgivings. Is it possible, they ask, for a Church to be truly united when constituted as that in South India is proposed to be constituted? You will have within it those who hold that there is one order only of Christian ministers, differentiated as to functions and special duties but essentially one, and others who regard the ministry as comprising three separate and distinct orders. There will be some within the united Church who regard Apostolic succession as essential to the regularity of the ministry and the services of the Church, and yet there will be, for some years at least, ministers of the Church, who have not been episcopally ordained. There will be certain churches in which these men cannot minister, except to a very restricted extent. Real unity, it is suggested, cannot exist under such conditions as these, and the attempt to create it is sure to fail.

Beneath these differences of administration and practice there is an underlying difference in the whole conception of Christianity which in the minds of many is fundamental. On the one side the emphasis is on the Church, the ministry and the sacraments: on the other it is on the gospel,

the work of grace, and the experience of salvation. This is not the place to discuss this cleavage, or to argue that one side of it is complementary to the other, and that both are necessary if the view of Christianity is to be complete. The unfortunate fact is that the cleavage exists, and the Christian world is divided into that which claims for itself the name 'Catholic', and that which is known as 'Protestant Evangelical'. The place of Methodism in this classification is not in doubt. Nor is there any doubt that the Church of South India must include both elements, and that the glory of its conception lies in the conviction that they can be included, not merely side by side, but in spiritual coalescence.

To many Methodists, as to many Anglicans, this seems impossible. They fear that their Protestant Evangelicalism will be compromised, as some Anglicans are fearing that their Catholicism will be compromised. They are asking whether the spirit and genius, as well as the organisation, of the united Church, will not be too strongly Anglican, and whether we Methodists are not being asked to part with too much of our inheritance of evangelical liberty. These fears will have to be overcome before the Conference can be expected to give a clear and cordial vote permitting those under its authority in South India to enter the United Church.

We Methodists in South India, with a few exceptions, believe that these questions can be satisfactorily answered; that there is every prospect that the united Church will be really united; that nothing vital on either side will be sacrificed; that there will be immeasurable gain from the fellowship; that the work which Methodism was born to do can and will be effectively done by the united Church; and that we are not putting our necks under a yoke which our fathers could not bear. But we here are only a few; the Methodist Conference and those whom it represents are very many. To persuade them to share our view and to approve what we propose to do must of necessity take time, especially as we are not yet quite unanimous here. But already there are many there in the Conference who are convinced that God is leading us, and are praying that all will be done in harmony with His will, and that union such as is becoming visible here may soon be seen far and wide.

To this general position Methodist Union has made very little difference, except that the Conference is now much larger than it was, and includes many delegates to whom the discussion of this question is new.

SHIMOGA, MYSORE. W. H. SPENCER.

Church of Scotland, Madras Mission Council

Extract from Minutes of Council of 1st December, 1933, *RE.*

South Indian Scheme of Church Union. On the recommendation of the Executive the following resolution was *adopted* :—

(a) Resolved to approve of the suggestions made by the committee for the improvement of the Scheme of Union in some details and request the members of Council who are members of the Union Committee of the South India United Church to bring these suggestions before the Committee, with a view to having them placed before the Joint Committee on Union.

(b) A letter from the Convener of the Special Committee of the Church of Scotland (Rev. Prin. Martin) in answer to the request contained in Min. 28 of February meeting of Council, having been circulated, was considered.

Resolved that the letter be communicated to the Union Committee of the South India United Church, and to the Madras Church Council, and that the members of Council who are on the Committee be asked to support the request contained in the letter for the association of presbyters with bishops in all consecrations.

(True Extract)

Conjeeveram, J. H. MACLEAN,
December 19, 1933. *Secretary.*

CHURCH OF SCOTLAND MISSION

REPORT OF COUNCIL'S COMMITTEE ON CHURCH UNION

The Committee appointed by the Mission Council in connection with Church Union in South India met in Madras on 7th October, 1933.

Present : Messrs. Boyd, Haldane, Job, MacCulloch, Maclean, Silver (*Convener*) and Misses Black, Greenfield, Kelly and Russell.

The meeting was opened with prayer.

The reports sent in by the groups of members of the Mission Council and others which had met at Coonoor, Kodaikanal, Madras and Munnar to study the Proposed Scheme of Union, having been circulated, were considered. It was noted that the attitude of all the groups was one of general approval of the Scheme. But various suggestions had been made by the groups as to points that seemed to call for amendment in the Scheme. The Sub-Committee as instructed by the Mission Council gave careful consideration to all these suggestions and *Resolved* to recommend that amendment of the Scheme be pressed for as follows :—(*Note* : The pages and sections quoted below refer to the 1933 edition of the Scheme except where otherwise stated).

1. Page 7, Section 9 (i) dealing with the functions of bishops. Omit the second sentence 'They shall include those of pastoral oversight . . .

discipline of the Church'. It is noted that this sentence does not appear in the 1931 edition and its omission is recommended on the grounds that

(*a*) it serves no purpose to include an incomplete statement of the functions of bishops.

(*b*) the sentence includes among the functions of bishops the 'ordination of ministers', a statement which does not agree with the statement on page 8 (iv) which reads, 'Every ordination of presbyters shall be performed by the laying on of hands of the bishop and presbyters.'

In addition to the omission of the sentence referred to the following change is recommended in the same connection :—On page 38 (iv) Ordination, the first sentence should be changed to read as follows :—'The bishop of the diocese will accept candidates for ordination and (in association with presbyters) ordain them . . .' (*Note* :—Similarly on page 41, line 4 the words 'his power of administering ordination or confirmation' might be changed to read 'his functions with respect to ordination and confirmation'.)

2. Page 28. Section 13. second line from foot of page. The sentence does not read correctly as it stands. Recommended to omit the word 'as' before 'visitors'.

3. Page 29. Section 14. third paragraph. Recommended that the Joint Committee be asked to consider whether instead of the words 'permit him to do so' it would not be better to use the words 'invite him to do so'.

4. Page 34, second paragraph. 'After this period of thirty years etc.'. Recommended that the words 'will determine' should be changed to read 'must determine for itself' as in the Basis of Union, page 14, second paragraph.

5. Page 39. Section 7 and page 63. Section 2. One group raised the question as to whether ordained missionaries of the Church of Scotland who associate themselves with the Church of South India will be subject only to its discipline while they are connected with it or to that of the Church of Scotland.

Recommended that this question be not raised before the Joint Committee on Union but that the attention of the Mission Council be drawn to it.

6. Page 57. fourth line from the foot of the page. Recommended that the words 'but the proposition as amended . . .' be changed to read, 'but the proposition, whether in the original form or as amended . . .'

The meeting was closed with the benediction.

(Signed) A. SILVER,
Convener.

CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

Special Committee anent Church Union in South India.

Reply to Letter of Madras Mission Council, 22nd February, 1933.

Before replying to the Letter of the Madras Mission Council now before them, the Committee desire to assure their brethren once more of the profound sympathy with which they and the Church for which they speak, regard the movement to which it relates. They have followed with the utmost interest the course of this unique and courageous effort to overcome those divisions of Western Christendom which have unhappily been reproduced in South India and on the Mission field elsewhere; and they cannot but renew the expression of their earnest prayer that, under God, the issue may be an achievement which will remove many hindrances to the evangelising of that great land, will release new forces for the upbuilding of Christ's Kingdom, and leave the whole Christian Church its debtor.

The question with which the Committee have to deal is '*Whether the difficulties expressed in (their) Memorandum of 15th April, 1930, have been removed by the changes introduced into the Scheme*', namely, in the edition published in January of the present year.

1. Briefly put, the difficulties referred to gather round what appeared to the Committee to be the predominant place given to Episcopacy in a Scheme of Union which sought to comprehend all that was essential to each of the three elements—the Episcopal, the Presbyterian, and the Congregational—represented by the Churches concerned. No doctrine of the nature of the Episcopate is to be required; on the other hand as the Memorandum observed, 'the practice of the Church will be uniform, a practice constitutionally defined and secured; and in accordance with it, will not the non-episcopalian (it was asked) find himself pledged to a system whose results can only be justified on the assumption of the truth of a doctrine which he disowns?' It was, in short, the exclusive claim apt to be associated with the 'Historic Episcopate', and the room apparently left for this in the Scheme, that occasioned misgiving. The Committee could not but view with concern proposals which seemed to leave it uncertain whether in the united Church, as ultimately constituted, the validity of all but Episcopal orders would not be brought in question, and even the right of the non-episcopally confirmed Church member to sacramental privileges perhaps denied. They thankfully acknowledge the serious effort that has been made to meet these doubts, which as is well known, were shared by many besides themselves.

2. At the outset, they cannot refrain from expressing the satisfaction with which they see the recognition given in the Constitution to the local congregation as the body representing in that place the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, and on that account invested with various weighty

Church privileges and obligations (p. 24). They regard this as a valuable assertion of the fundamental principle of the priesthood of all believers; and while not forgetting the special conditions of the Indian Church, they venture to urge that the more practical effect is given to this principle, for example in the selection of the pastor of the congregation and in the exercise of congregational discipline, the more the whole membership will be educated to realise both the freedom and the responsibility that belong to them as members of the Body of Christ.

3. With reference to the Episcopate, the Committee recall (*a*) in the first place, that the office is accepted 'in a constitutional form' (as defined p. 25, Rule 10); and they recognise that more pains than ever have been taken to co-ordinate its exercise at every point with that of the powers of the other office-bearers of the Church and of the people, so that as it is put (p. 5), 'the Episcopate, the Presbyterate, and the Congregation of the faithful (shall) all in their several spheres have responsibility and exercise authority in the life and work of the Church, in its governance and administration, in its evangelistic and pastoral work, in its discipline and in its worship'.

(*b*) Next, they observe with much interest the note which the S.I.U.C. propose to insert at the foot of page 7, and they highly approve of it. The Committee realise that neither this nor any other explanation which may be given by any of the uniting Churches of the sense in which they severally understand the term in question (the 'Historic Episcopate') can affect the character of the office itself as adopted by the united Church—that is defined in the provisions of the constitution and can only be ascertained from the functions actually assigned to it. At the same time, it is of the very nature of the Scheme that the Communions which take part in framing it differ in their views of this essential element in the basis on which the united Church is to be built; and in these circumstances the Committee consider it wise and right that the agreement reached should not be merely tacit but, as is proposed, frank and explicit. This appears to them calculated not only to prevent misunderstanding at the outset, but to secure for the non-Episcopalian view in the united Church its proper scope and influence.

(*c*) The further significant qualification (p. 25, Rule 10) with reference to the acceptance of Episcopacy in the united Church (which *has* constitutional efficacy) is for the moment reserved (See below, part 4).

(*d*) With reference to the extent of the powers of the Episcopate, more especially where fundamental qustions affecting the life of the Church are concerned, the Committee note with satisfaction that what was here an apparent inconsistency (commented on in their former Memorandum) with the position claimed for the Synod as 'the supreme governing and legislative body of the Church' (p. 56, Rule 13) has now been removed. Ela-

borate checks and delays, indeed, are now placed upon the exercise of Synodical authority, but ultimately this authority prevails. The Committee consider the agreement reached on this point to be most important, and they deprecate the alternative suggestion that on such matters the final vote shall be taken by Houses, as surrendering the principle of the exercise of authority by representative Church Councils and as placing an excessive power in the hands of a body of office-bearers who, relatively, would be very few.

(*e*) Finally, the Committee welcome the agreement with regard to the permissive participation of presbyters in the consecration of bishops (p. 26, Rule 10 (iv), also p. 44) as implying and suggesting to the general mind in the degree in which the practice should prevail throughout the Church—that the power of Order is not confined to the Episcopate alone.

4. On the other hand, the Historic Episcopate is being carried on, in its proper character, into the united Church, and the Committee realise that union would not otherwise be feasible. Notwithstanding the association with it of other elements throughout, that office according to the present proposals exercises a special jurisdiction as regards the Worship, the Discipline, and the Government of the Church; and in particular an inherent and inalienable power in the matter of Ordination will belong to it alone. It follows that analogous features of a non-episcopal Church system will be proportionately abridged: either, as in the case of the fundamental principle of Ministerial parity, they will be eliminated, or as with the administrative and judicial functions of the Eldership, they will be curtailed. The result is a Scheme which appears more successfully to 'comprehend' the vital elements of Episcopal than of non-Episcopal Church life and usage, and the question arises whether a more perfect combination of these is not attainable? The Committee suggest the association of representative presbyters in the laying on of hands at *all* episcopal consecrations as in a real degree fitted to serve this purpose. The adoption of such a practice would have many advantages. It would symbolise, at a crucial point, the retention of non-Episcopal Church principle; would prevent the confusion of thought that might arise throughout the Church over a merely partial or local participation; and its very novelty would emphasise the fact that what is being aimed at is a new thing in Church History and in the constitution of the Christian Church. In such an event, the Committee would find even more reassurance than before in the declaration (pp. 25ff., Rule 10) that the unification of the Church's ministry on an Episcopal basis 'does not involve the denial of the validity of regularity of any other form of the Ministry', and again, that not only will the acceptance of Episcopacy not bind the Church to any particular theory concerning Episcopacy or concerning Orders of the Ministry, but that 'it (the Church) will not require the acceptance of any such theory as a necessary qualification for its Ministry, nor make it a determining factor in its relations with other Churches',

The Committee attach the utmost value to these provisions. No doubt all parties are taking risks, and the exact form which the Church may assume at the close of the tentative period allowed for cannot be forecast with certainty. But the Committee are persuaded that, if given effect to both in the letter and in the spirit—and more especially were the suggestion now made to prove feasible—these arrangements would preclude the emergence of any undesirable exclusiveness of Church polity in the future, and would go far to ensure the fulfilment of the reiterated desire of the framers of the Scheme that full communion and fellowship would be maintained with those Churches and federations of Churches with which the uniting Churches have such fellowship, and even be further extended.

5. The Committee would add that they earnestly trust that in the future no difficulty may arise in the unifying of the Christianity of South India with that of North India; and they take leave to suggest to their brethren that all due weight be given to this consideration in the negotiations still before them.

6. As regards the special relations in which the Church of Scotland stands to the S.I.U.C. these must necessarily come up for full consideration later. Meanwhile, the Committee feel sure that on both sides it would be desired to have these relations carried over as far as might be to the united Church.

In name and by authority of the Committee

September 7, 1933. ALEX. MARTIN.

(True Copy.)

CONJEEVERAM, J. H. MACLEAN,
October 3, 1933. *Secretary.*

The Spiritual Value of the Ministry

In all our negotiations for union it has been agreed that every one who was regarded as a minister in his own Church would become a minister of the united Church without re-ordination. Surprise has sometimes been expressed at the firmness with which this has been insisted on by members of the non-episcopal Churches. Why, it has been asked, should a Presbyterian minister be unwilling to accept episcopal ordination with a view to making sure that his ministry was recognised in a wider area than hitherto? To this the reply has been that he might have no objection to receiving *some* sort of commission to exercise his ministry in the wider area, but that to have the commission given by ordination would involve an admission that he was not already ordained as a minister of the Word and the Sacraments, and this admission he could not truthfully make. He had been solemnly set apart by the laying on of hands, and had been engaged in the preaching

of the Word and the administration of the sacraments. However conscious he might be of his own unworthiness, and of defects in his ministry, he knew that the purpose of the ministry had been served—that sinners had been saved and believers built up in their most holy faith.

In taking this stand the ministers of the non-episcopal Churches knew that they were supported by their people, who knew that through the work of their ministers they had received the blessing of God. The Word had been proclaimed and expounded by men who had been trained for this work, and through the Sacraments their souls had been nourished. If people troubled them with suggestions that their ministers had not been validly ordained they replied that the only validity they cared about was a validity of saving power. No theoretic considerations regarding validity could prevail against spiritual experience.

It may be said that this argument is dangerous, and may lead to the view that no special ministry is necessary, and any one through whom we obtain spiritual good may be regarded as a minister. Now of course it is true that blessing comes to us through many channels, and not merely through an ordained ministry. Yet the Presbyterian, no less than the Anglican, believes that Christ established a ministry, and that it is *ordinarily* through this ministry that He works. The original ministry was an evangelistic ministry, for the proclamation of the good news. It was also an edifying ministry, for those who believed the good news must be shepherded. Thus the apostles were evangelists, and they also laboured for the instruction and guidance of those who had been led to become disciples of Jesus. They also provided for the continuation of their ministry by ordaining elders—the presbyter-bishops of the early Church. No doubt much that has come to be specially regarded as the work of ministers was in early days included in the responsibility of the ordinary members. The injunction of St. Paul in 1 Thes. v. 12 to 'admonish the disorderly, encourage the faint-hearted, support the weak' was addressed not to any special class of office-bearers, but to all the members, and any theory of the ministry which relieves the membership of such responsibility stands condemned. But within the short period covered by the New Testament we find such duties laid in a special way on the elders. In Paul's address to the elders of Ephesus (Acts xx. 18-35) we have a deeply moving expression of the apostle's conception of his own ministry, and of the responsibility of those who, as elders or bishops (both names are applied to the same men, vv. 17 and 28), shared it with him. As time went on the functions of the office-bearers were more clearly defined, and duties came to be confined to the bishop which in earlier days were the duties of the presbyter. Regarding this change there has been much controversy, into which we cannot enter here. The point to be noted is that with all changes the functions of the ministry remain the same—the bringing of men into discipleship and the nourishment of their spiritual life by the Word and Sacraments, and by the exercise of discipline.

With regard to the perpetuation of the ministry there is of course great difference of view. To some it seems that succession has been maintained by a chain of bishops beginning with the Apostles, and that no one has a right to minister who has not received ordination at the hands of a bishop whose place in this succession cannot be called in question. Others are convinced that no such succession can be proved to exist; or they may go further and show that its existence can be definitely disproved. Yet most will admit the value of continuity, and in almost every branch of the Church care is taken to secure that ordination is the act of those who have themselves been ordained, and who regard it as one of the chief functions of their ministry to provide for its continuance. Some Presbyterians attach importance to the presentation of an unbroken succession, and hold that, in some countries at least, it was not broken at the Reformation, but continued through a regular succession of presbyters. To others the proof of this seems inadequate, but about its inadequacy they care little. Whatever gaps there may have been there exists at the present time a system by which the ministry is continued. Men are chosen who believe that they have received a call from God to minister in His Church. By a Presbytery, or other body similarly constituted, they are tested as to the reality of their call, and as to their fitness in point of education, character and experience for the work. If the body which is asked to ordain is satisfied as to this, and also as to the provision of a suitable sphere in which the ministry is to be exercised, e.g., the pastorate of a church, it arranges for the ordination. This is conducted with great solemnity. The candidate declares his faith and purpose, and enters into a covenant with God to perform all the duties of the ministry, as one who at the last great day must give an account. He is then set apart for the work by prayer and the laying on of hands by those already in the ministry. He is also commissioned to exercise his ministry, more especially in the particular office to which he has been called.

Presbyterians thus take great care to see that only those of whom Christ approves are set apart as ministers in His Church, and other Churches have their own ways of securing the same result. But it must be admitted that not even the best of systems works with unfailing success. There have been periods of spiritual deadness when the ministry had little spiritual efficacy, and at any time there may be men who have been regularly ordained and yet are spiritually powerless. The history of the Church clearly shows that the purpose of the ministry is sometimes better served by those whose ordination is less regular, or are outside of the regular ministry altogether. Thus while regularity and continuity are highly desirable, it seems clear that the Head of the Church does not regard them as essential. Can any one seriously maintain that the Churches of Norway and Denmark, which were not able at the Reformation to maintain the episcopal succession, are on a lower level spiritually than the Church of Sweden, in which the succession was preserved? Or that the Church in Holland, which since

the Reformation has been Presbyterian, is less effective as a spiritual force than the Episcopal Churches? The story of modern missions shows that in the work of winning men for Christ and fitting them for His service no single type of organisation can claim that it alone, or even pre-eminently, has been successful. God has honoured the testimony of His ministers and His people in various Churches, and as a result of their work the message of Christ is being carried from land to land; multitudes are being led to discipleship, and manifest the reality of their profession by the change in their lives.

Such is our conception of the spiritual value of the ministry. Much might be said about the desirability that the work of the ministry should be done by men specially trained for it, specially set apart for it, and set free from the necessity of taking up any other occupation; and also that due care be taken to see that only those whom Christ has chosen be thus set apart. But in the last resort it is not by what any man or body of men can do in the way of securing regularity, or pronouncing as to fitness, that the spiritual value of any particular ministry is to be judged, but by the effect of the ministry on those who come under its influence.

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